

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Attitudes Toward Local Communist Regime and Leaders

1. popular discontent with the regime seemed to be mounting, although it was not expressed openly. The causes of this unrest were multiple, these could be placed in two general categories:
 - a. The steady deterioration of material living conditions; and
 - b. The complete lack of democratic freedom.
2. Every social and economic group had its particular reasons for being dissatisfied. The following are a few examples:
 - a. Manual laborers and office workers had lost the right to change their jobs of their own free will;
 - b. Persons who did not belong to the Bulgarian Communist Party had no chance of getting better jobs;
 - c. Young people had no choice either as to their type of work or their place of employment;
 - d. Laborers were dissatisfied with the new work system; it had brought about a lowering of workers' wages;

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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- e. The peasants were dissatisfied with living conditions in the villages; and
 - f. Housewives complained of the difficulties of obtaining certain foods, such as sugar, butter, and cheese.
3. Although it was almost impossible to express one's dissatisfaction openly, there was a certain amount of silent resistance which manifested itself in various ways. For example:
- a. While standing in the endless queues, housewives complained of the high prices and the shortages of certain food items, especially sugar;
 - b. Students who were graduating and were about to get their first jobs tried to circumvent the orders of the various ministries, which assigned them to certain jobs in certain localities, by feigning illness; no one wanted to be assigned to a rural district;
 - c. Manual laborers, disgruntled by the constant increase in production norms and the new work system, expressed their discontent by doing just enough to fulfill their norms; [redacted] there was some sabotage in the factories to protest against the working conditions; 25X1
 - d. It was rumored that the regime had great difficulty in forcing the peasants to toe the Communist line; peasants in various parts of the country were said to have risen openly against the regime on several occasions; even the Communist press could not overlook the revolt of the peasants against new cooperatives, which took place in Yablanitsa in 1952; there were also peasant uprisings in Vidin in 1952;
 - e. Soldiers, who were especially dissatisfied with the poor conditions of life in the Army and with the 3-year term of service, sabotaged military discipline and occasionally aided clandestine resistance groups; [redacted] while in command of 10 men on guard duty one night, he had discovered members of the Bulgarian resistance in the act of sabotaging a military depot; he allowed them to escape and was later asked to account for his action; he stated that he had no specific order to shoot, and fortunately, the soldiers' manual states that his duty was to protect his men when he did not know the size of the enemy group; he later confided that he would not have fired at the group, because he approved of what it was doing; and ... 25X1
 - f. Office workers generally offered only passive resistance; they expressed their disapproval by not attending meetings, conferences, and other functions which the trade unions and other organizations tried to impose upon them.
4. The most dissatisfied elements were the peasants, young people in general (especially university students), and soldiers.
5. Each group had a certain number of persons who favored the regime. The largest number of these seemed to be among the intelligentsia, although one could never be sure of the sincerity of their attitude. This was especially true of authors and artists, which were the most favored groups. Many Army officers also have favored the regime; most are now ardent and fanatic Communists. Yet there have been rumors of discontent among them. The general opinion, however, was that the officers were the most solid supporters of the regime. The enlisted men were generally opposed

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to it. There was also general discontent among the members of the Militia, and there have been rumors that frequent changes were made in the Militia organization. The most anti-regime people were to be found among the laboring class, the peasants, and young people 18 years of age and older, that is to say, the middle and poor classes.

6. All features of the Bulgarian Communist regime were disliked. The most outstanding features may possibly have been:
 - a. The constant supervision by the Militia;
 - b. Economic regulations, difficult living conditions, low wages and high prices; and
 - c. The complete lack of democratic freedoms and the uncertainty.
7. The people secretly ridiculed all Communist efforts to make them believe that all was well in Bulgaria, and that they were happy while people in the capitalist countries suffered.
8. Popular antagonism centered around Vŭlko Chervenkov. He was at the head of the government and was also secretary-general of the Communist Party. He thus represented all the power in the country and was responsible for all the ills besetting the country. Other Communist leaders were merely ignored. 25X1

none of the Communists are popular. Georgi Dimitrov may have become more popular since his death, but this popularity stems from the rumor that he was killed in Moscow because he was not in complete agreement with the Soviet Communist Party line. The population in general considered the Communist leaders to be pawns of the Kremlin.
9. The privileges enjoyed by the so-called Communist "aristocracy," which had visibly drifted away from the masses, were a constant source of irritation to the people. They particularly resented the enormous salaries given the Communists and the marked class distinction existing since the advent of the Communist regime, a distinction based solely on one's social origin.

Local Communist Leaders and the Kremlin Changeover

10. The initial acts of the new government of the USSR after the death of Stalin, such as the exoneration of the Soviet physicians, the declaration of amnesty, and the lowering of prices, were regarded in Bulgaria as a direct slur on Stalin's name.
11. As of early June 1953, the Stalin cult was being replaced in Bulgaria by the Malenkov cult.
12. Portraits of Stalin were still displayed, but not in such large numbers as before his death. The portraits seen most frequently were those of Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov.
13. It was commonly believed in Bulgaria that all orders come from Moscow. As for the Marxist doctrine, 25X1

the Bulgarian Communist regime followed the Pravda line and perhaps received instructions from the Marx-Lenin Institute in Moscow.

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Group Antagonisms

14. A general cleavage between the Communists and non-Communists was apparent everywhere, in the offices, factories, and schools, and in the towns and villages. Anyone who wanted to get a well-paid job or to make a career for himself had to be a member of the Communist Party, for Party members enjoyed privileges in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the country. All executive and supervisory jobs were filled by Communists. If, for example, a non-Communist and a Communist applied for the same position, preference was always given to the Communist, even though his qualifications for the job might be inferior to those of the non-Communist. Students who wanted to go abroad to pursue their studies, or wanted to become scientists, journalists, or authors, had to be members of the Communist Party. In short, all doors were open to members of the Party.
15. It was common knowledge that the Communist Party was conducting a strong campaign against religion and that people who practiced their religion were regarded as reactionaries. [redacted] national or racial antagonism, although a few years ago there was the problem of the Pomaks. 25X1
16. Antagonism between Communists and non-Communists was also evident in literature and the arts. General culture worried the Communists, and they attacked bitterly any work which did not conform to the Party line. [redacted] the following example: In February 1952, Literaturny Front, periodical of the Union of Bulgarian Authors, published several unfavorable critiques of Dimitur Dimov's novel Tyutyun (Tobacco), calling it reactionary and accusing it of not corresponding to socialist reality since it did not give first place to the working class, etc. A few days later, Rabotnichesko Delo, organ of the Bulgarian Communist Party, published anonymously an article written by Vulko Chervenkov, the head of the government, in which he deplored the "unfortunate criticism" of this novel which, in his opinion, possessed great literary merit. Immediately after the publication of this article, all those who had previously condemned it recanted. The same necessity for conformity to the socialist pattern was also seen in the other arts, such as music and painting. In the latter, for example, the approved models were contemporary French painters and the Bulgarian artists Zhendov and Shtarkelov. The works of contemporary Soviet, Bulgarian, Eastern European, and other Satellite authors served as models in the field of drama. The works of Schiller, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Tolstoy were completely absent, while Shakespeare was very poorly represented. 25X1
17. The positions with unnecessarily high salaries given to Party members were also a bone of contention. For example, every office, factory, and village had a high-salaried Communist Party secretary, whose functions consisted of managing the affairs of the Party. There were always several employees of the personnel office whose task was to spy on the other employees of the office or plant, and they were well paid. In addition, there were highly paid officials of the local committees of the Communist Party and the Fatherland Front to be found throughout the country.
18. Dissension was to be found in all academic fields. Scientists, for example, had to recognize the superiority of Soviet science and follow only the viewpoints of Soviet scientists. The Soviet Union allegedly led the field in biology and in the social and political sciences. Professors whose ideas did not agree with the official Communist viewpoint on scientific matters were deprived of the right to teach in universities. Many scientists and other scholars, among them biologists

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and professors of literature, therefore found themselves constrained to give in to Communism. The situation was somewhat different in the case of professors of jurisprudence. Almost all of those at the University of Sofia have been replaced by Communists.

19. There were courses in the principles of Communist scientific doctrine and in Marxism-Leninism which were given at a school in the village of Bankya, near Sofia, which were compulsory for all professors. These professors were obliged to spend 20 days at the school.

Necessities and Improvements

20. [redacted] the irrigation projects were generally recognized favorably by the majority of the people. 25X1
21. The positive achievements of the Communist regime in Bulgaria were, [redacted] the improvements made in the social services and in industrial development. However, [redacted] Bulgaria did not have the necessary prerequisites for the large-scale industrialization which the Communists were trying to introduce and that rapid and excessive industrialization would unquestionably lead to the enslavement of the Bulgarian people and servitude to the Soviet Union. 25X1
22. There was a sad lack of improvement in other fields, e.g., housing and working conditions. The situation in June 1953 was worse than before or during World War II. A man worked eight hours a day six days a week and then had to attend meetings, either at his place of employment or in a private home and had to spend a good part of his leisure time studying and preparing answers to questions asked at these meetings.
23. Recreational facilities in Sofia, a city with a population of about 500,000, were totally inadequate. There were only three or four places where one could dance. The films were generally propaganda films. The legitimate theater and the opera were so well patronized that it was almost impossible to obtain tickets, and the repertoires consisted almost exclusively of contemporary Soviet and Bulgarian dramas, which were full of propaganda. Public lectures on literature and science were always biased politically.
24. Education was allegedly free and accessible to all, but so many formalities had to be complied with, such as showing proof not only of the student's but also of the family's positive attitude toward the regime, that it was very difficult to enter a university.
25. There were grave difficulties in the field of agriculture. The Bulgarian peasant was traditionally deeply attached to his land and always had a great sense of property ownership. Since the advent of Communism, peasants have grown very dissatisfied with the cooperative farm system which has been forced upon them.
26. To express personal ideas was disastrous. Opportunities for advancement were available only to those who followed the Party line. [redacted] 25X1
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Deprivations and Aspirations

27. Each social group had its own hopes. For example, an average citizen (an office worker or a simple laborer) longed for better living conditions, freedom to choose or to change his job, freedom from the secret Militia, a non-Communist government, freedom of the press, religion, and expression, and free communication with Western countries.
28. Young men of college age wanted the possibility of choosing their own profession, assurance for the future, democratic freedoms, the freedom to come into contact with Western countries, and better living conditions.
29. Intellectuals, scientists, authors, poets, musicians, and artists desired, first of all, to be free of all restrictions, i.e., to have a real chance to develop their talents without having to worry about pleasing the Communists. For this reason, they wanted a democratic government, democratic freedoms, and free communication with Western countries.
30. All social groups agreed on one point--the necessity of getting rid of the Communist regime and its restrictions.

Rumor and the Grapevine

31. [redacted] how rumors were organized, [redacted] they were an important source of information. In general, rumors were directed against the regime. 25X1
32. The average citizen did not have any details concerning forced labor camps, but did know of their existence. Many people in Sofia had relatives in labor camps. Living conditions in these camps were very difficult and there were many cases of mental illness and a high suicide rate. The worst of the forced labor camps was the Belene camp which housed political prisoners for the most part. Many had been there for five years without having been informed of the charges against them. Prisoners were allowed to write one post card to their families each month and to receive one food package weighing no more than three kilograms. [redacted] food in the camp was very poor and that the prisoners lacked clothing. Some Bulgarian citizens were deported to the Soviet Union; one well-known case was the famous Bulgarian artist of Russian origin, Evgeni Zhdanovski. 25X1

Foreign Broadcasts

33. [redacted] almost every house in Sofia had a radio receiver, and that, as far as she knew, everyone who had a radio listened eagerly to Western radio programs. To her knowledge, most people listened to evening programs because it was more convenient. She guessed that about four persons listened to each radio set. 25X1

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34. People who did not own radios got their news from friends. News traveled quickly via the grapevine. Almost everyone knew within 24 hours what had been said on a particular Western broadcast.

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35. [redacted] rarely discussed religion with [redacted] friends or acquaintances. a religious program would be neither very interesting nor important to the average Bulgarian. Religious beliefs were not discussed in public. Although the regime was busy conducting an anti-religious propaganda campaign in the schools and plants, the churches were open and the people were free to visit them. Some Catholic and Protestant clergymen, but no Greek Orthodox, were brought to trial. [redacted] the Bulgarian people were attached to their religion in spite of the anti-religious propaganda. This fact was especially evident on holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, when the churches were packed.

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Attitudes Toward Other Nationalities

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36. [redacted] Czechoslovakia and Poland were popular among the Bulgarian people because of the resistance shown by the people of these countries to the Communist regime.

37. [redacted]

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38. Politically, Bulgaria was disappointed with France because of the instability of its government. Culturally, the Bulgarians loved France, whose influence in their country has always been very strong.

39. [redacted] the only hope for Bulgaria rested with the United States. This belief was based on the conviction that the United States was the only country which followed a consistent anti-Communist policy. The statements made by outstanding Americans to the effect that they wished to see a free Bulgaria have made a deep impression on the Bulgarian people. [redacted] statements by the chiefs of state of European countries. [redacted] the hope and encouragement derived by the Bulgarian people from the speech made by President Eisenhower after his election.

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Knowledge of Conditions in the USSR

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40. People in Bulgaria knew very little about life in the USSR. Occasionally, on their return home, students who had been sent to the Soviet Union to study would discuss in general terms conditions in the USSR and restrictions imposed upon foreigners there. A young woman [redacted] who had returned from studies in the USSR had told [redacted] that she had not been allowed to travel from Moscow to Leningrad without special permission and that she had been forbidden to travel in industrial regions. [redacted] one [redacted] co-workers on the Committee of Democratic Bulgarian Women in Sofia, who had lived in the USSR for 25 years and whose daughter had married there, that the prices of all commodities were high in the USSR.

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41. The general impressions of conditions in the Soviet Union were unfavorable, although they were thought to be better than in Bulgaria.

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Attitude Toward Russians

43. [redacted] the attitude toward Soviet experts in Bulgaria was unfavorable. 25X1
A growing hatred of these experts was noticeable everywhere, not only because they were representatives of a hated regime, but also because of the exorbitant salaries which they received.

44. [redacted] 25X1

45. [redacted] in general, the Bulgarian people did not like the Soviet experts and felt that they were the true bosses of the country. The prevailing opinion was that there was a sufficient number of Bulgarian experts to fill the jobs. [redacted] Soviet personnel in the Ministry of the Interior, the Council of Ministers, and the Ministry of Defense were very unpopular. 25X1

Attitudes Toward Soviet Leaders

46. [redacted] to the average citizen. Stalin was the incarnation of all that Communism represents. [redacted] He was the symbol of all their misfortune. [redacted] he was responsible for all the misfortunes and difficulties which they had to endure. 25X1

47. [redacted] the Bulgarian people considered the new Kremlin regime a stable one, but she felt that this opinion may have changed since the ouster of Beria.

48. The more conciliatory attitude of the new Soviet regime in the first few months following the death of Stalin loosened the tension in Bulgaria somewhat, and gave rise to some hope that there might be some changes in Bulgaria also. 25X1

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